

Testimony of Susan B. Anthony Project
**In Support of HB 5031, AN ACT CONCERNING SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON
COLLEGE CAMPUSES**

Mary DeLucia, Sexual Assault Adult Advocate
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement, March, 6, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and distinguished members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Mary DeLucia, and I am the Sexual Assault Adult Advocate for Susan B. Anthony Project which is a member center of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services providing support for sexual assault survivors of Litchfield County. I would like to start by stating that I am in support of HB 5031, An Act Concerning Sexual Violence on College Campuses.

Approximately 3 percent of all college women become victims of either completed or attempted rape during the 9-month academic year, which is roughly translated to 35 crimes of sexual violence for every 1,000 women students.¹ This number may not seem very high, but if you take a college or university campus with 20,000 women students on it, that means 700 of those women students will be victims of crimes of sexual violence! HB 5031 will require colleges and universities to adopt and disclose policy regarding sexual assault and intimate partner violence that include written detailed reporting procedures for survivors on campus, supportive resources on and off campus for survivors, and a written summary of disciplinary procedures that affects both the accuser and the accused. With this policy being accessible to survivors on campus, students who are victims of sexual violence will know and understand their rights as well as feel that their concerns for their safety on campus are validated by school officials. Student survivors will also be aware of the school's policy and procedure regarding their perpetrator's rights and will be given a realistic view of the disciplinary process.

HB 5031 will also require colleges and universities to provide primary prevention and awareness programming and education to new students and faculty members each year. In a recent survey of high school students, 56% of girls and 76% of boys believed that forced sex was acceptable under certain circumstances.² That means that over 50% of incoming college freshmen had validated rape and attempted rape in some instances. By providing primary prevention education programs to students and faculty on campus the campus community will have a new perspective of attitudes and beliefs on sexual violence, that includes what the legal definition of sexual assault is. By creating a new community perspective of sexual violence on campus we can lower the potential rapes and attempted rapes each year at universities and colleges. In order to lower rapes and attempted rapes we need to let students and faculty know that it is necessary and relevant to talk about this topic in order to maintain safety on campus.

¹ United States. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. National Institute of Justice. Sexual Assault on Campus: What Colleges and Universities Are Doing About It. Washington DC: December 2005.

² United States. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Violence Against Women Office. Grants to Reduce Violent Crimes Against Women on Campus. Washington DC: 2002. www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/182369.pdf

I would like to conclude by telling the Committee of one experience of an anonymous survivor of sexual violence on a local campus in Litchfield county. A new student started her first year of college at the University of Connecticut in Torrington during the Fall of 1999. During that year of 1999 to 2000, there was a staff member who had authority over students. This staff member sexually assaulted the student multiple times. Due to lack of resources and support for sexual assault survivors on campus, the student did not feel safe to come forward about her perpetrator's multiple sexual assaults against her. The student ended up dropping out of school at the end of that year in 2000 and moved out of state. A year later, she transferred to another university out of state because she did not feel safe returning to the University of Connecticut. And it is not until now, 11 to 12 years after she survived the crimes of sexual violence committed against her, that she feels safe enough to come forward about the sexual assault.

HB 5031 is in need on all college and university campuses because sexual assault happens on commuter campuses as well as residential campuses. Women students who go to college are more likely to be victims of rape than their counterparts who don't go to college.¹ Let's keep campuses safe for students by validating these concerns about campus crimes of sexual violence with a written policy for every school to follow. Let's change the campus community's perspective on sexual assault by offering education and awareness programming to new students and faculty. Yes, it is a scary crime to talk about, but it needs to be talked about in order to understand how to end it. Dropping out of school should not be in any student's safety plan.

Thank you for your time.

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